DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 343 361 EC 301 047

AUTHOR	Lange, Cheryl M.; Ysseldyke, James E.
TITLE	Participation of Students with Disabilities and Special Needs in Postsecondary Enrollment Options. Research Report No. 1. Enrollment Options for Students with Disabilities.
INSTITUTION	Minnesota Univ., Minneapolis.
SPONS AGENCY	Special Education Programs (ED/OSERS), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	Nov 91
CONTRACT	H023C0004
NOTE	29p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)
JOURNAL CIT	NOTE For related documents, see EC 301 048-050.
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	College School Cooperation; College Students; Developmental Disabilities; *Disabilities; English (Second Language); Enrollment; Gifted; Grade 11; Grade 12; Higher Education; High Schools; Individualized Education Programs; Learning Disabilities; Mental Retardation; Needs Assessment; *Postsecondary Education; *School Choice; Special Needs Students; State Programs; *Student Participation; Urban Education; Vocational Education
IDENTIFIERS	*Postsecondary Enrollment Options Act (Minnesota)

ABSTRACT

This study examined the extent to which students with disabilities or special needs participate in Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO), a Minnesota program which allows 11th and 12th grade students to complete high school credits at a 4-year or 2-year college or a postsecondary vocational training institution. Directors of the PSEO programs at the 77 participating postsecondary institutions were surveyed. Among findings were: (1) 8 percent of the reported 4,183 PSEO participants were considered to be students with disabilities or special needs; (2) 90 percent of these students were attending technical colleges or the University of Minnesota; (3) 47 percent were identified as having learning disabilities or special needs and 17 percent were gifted; (4) 8% reported English as their second language; (5) 8 percent of students were reported as having mental retardation or developmental disabilities; (6) 42 percent of PSEO students in urban areas were identified as disabled; and (7) Individualized Education Plans existed for 132 of the 318 program participants with disabilities. Comments from respondents addressed concerns about resources, knowledge of handicapping conditions, policy, positive feedback, student characteristics, accessibility issues, and inadequate transition. The study's implications for provision of support services, transition planning, and the need to supply more information to the postsecondary institutions are addressed. (7 references) (DB)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED343861

Participation of Students with Disabilities and Special Needs in Postsecondary Enrollment Options

Research Report No. 1

Enrollment Options for Students with Disabilities

Cheryl M. Lange and James E. Ysseldyke

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

November, 1991

EC 301047

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Research Report No. 1

Participation of Students with Disabilities and Special Needs in Postsecondary Enrollment Options

Cheryl M. Lange and James E. Ysseldyke
University of Minnesota

Enrollment Options for Students with Disabilities

University of Minnesota

November, 1991

Abstract

The extent to which students with disabilities or special needs participate in Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) was examined. Surveys were sent to the 77 participating postsecondary institutions in the state of Minnesota to determine the number of students with disabilities or special needs participating in the option, the type of disability or special needs, and the type of institution attended. Eight percent of the reported participants were students with disabilities or special needs. Of the eight percent, the majority of students were those with learning disabilities. However, all disability and special needs groups were represented. The majority of students with disabilities attended technical colleges. Implications for students with disabilities and their programs are discussed.

This project was supported by Grant No. H023C0004 from the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education. The views expressed are those of the authors, and not necessarily of the funding agency.

Participation of Students with Disabilities and Special Needs in Postsecondary Enrollment Options

As the debate continues nationally on the merits of public school choice, states are involved in the process of implementing school choice programs on a day-to-day basis. While Minnesota was one of the first states to initiate school choice legislation and has some of the most comprehensive legislation to date, the number of states proposing or passing similar legislation has grown to over 25 (Paulu, 1989). Minnesota's experiences provide an excellent opportunity for those interested in the effects of school choice legislation to gain a better understanding of what is actually happening when students and parents choose programs other than the traditional offerings.

Included in the Minnesota school choice programs are seven enrollment options serving students in kindergarten through 12th grade. These options vary in purpose and organization. The options include four programs designed to meet the needs of at-risk students: High School Graduation Incentives, Education Program for Minor Parents and Pregnant Minors, Alternative Schools, and Area Learning Centers. Another popular enrollment option, Open Enrollment, allows parents and students to choose a school outside the student's resident district subject to racial balance and space availability in the receiving districts. Charter schools, the most recent addition to Minnesota's enrollment options, gives teachers, parents, and students an opportunity to develop a school independent of organized school districts yet remain funded by the state. The first of

Minnesota's enrollment options, Postsecondary Enrollment Options, provides an opportunity for 11th and 12th grade students to complete high school credits at a four-year college or university, two-year community college, or a postsecondary vocational training institution.

It is crucial that special education and the students it serves are not left out of the enrollment option debate, yet there is an apparent lack of discussion about the effects of school choice on students with disabilities. The Minnesota experience enables special educators to get a handle on the extent to which students with disabilities are involved in enrollment options and the effects of their involvement on their programs and education.

In this paper we describe one of the more popular enrollment options, Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO), examine the participation of special education students in this option, and consider the implications for programs and students choosing PSEO.

Minnesota is not alone in providing postsecondary options as nine other states currently have similar programs (Public School Choice Activity, February, 1989: New Jersey Department of Education, May, 1989). However, Minnesota's program has been in place since 1985 and allows juniors and seniors in high school to take courses at a college, university, or technical college for high school credit. The intent of the program is to provide students with a greater variety of class offerings and the opportunity to pursue more challenging coursework. The tuition, fees, and required textbooks are provided at no cost to the student. Students may take one or more courses up to a full-time

academic load. They typically combine high school coursework with the postsecondary classes.

During the 1990-91 school year, over 6,700 high school students participated in PSEO in Minnesota. These students attended 77 different Minnesota postsecondary institutions. No data have been gathered documenting the number of students enrolled in PSEO who have handicapping conditions. Yet, in talking with several directors of PSEO programs, it became apparent that high school special education students were enrolling in postsecondary institutions through the enrollment option.

The purpose of this study was to document the participation of students with disabilities and special needs in postsecondary enrollment options and to ascertain the concerns and positive expectations of the program directors. The following research questions are addressed:

- To what extent do students with disabilities participate in postsecondary enrollment options?
- To what extent is there differential participation as a function of category of disability, type of school, or location?
- To what extent do the participants indicate to the program directors that they are on an Individual Education Plan?
- What are the issues and concerns program directors express about the enrollment of students with disabilities or special needs in Postsecondary Enrollment Options?

Method

A survey was designed to ascertain the number of students with disabilities or special needs participating in PSEO, the extent to which there was differential participation, and the extent to which Individual Education Plans were reported to the directors at the institutions. Respondents were also asked to share any concerns about the PSEO program for students with disabilities or special needs.

Surveys were distributed to the Directors of the PSEO programs at the 77 participating postsecondary institutions in Minnesota. These institutions included 5 University of Minnesota campuses, 6 state universities, 15 private colleges, 19 community colleges, and 32 technical colleges. These institutions serve students in the large metropolitan area of Minneapolis and St. Paul and the smaller cities and rural areas of Minnesota.

The Directors were asked to indicate the total number of students who were enrolled through the PSEO program on December 1, 1990 (selected because it is the date of the annual child count by school districts). In addition, they were asked to determine the number of participating students who had handicapping conditions or special needs, identify the handicapping conditions or special needs categories of the students and to indicate whether the students with disabilities had Individual Education Plans (IEPs). Since the schools had no formal identification process, the Directors were asked to identify handicapping condition by information they had gained through interviews with the students

or their instructors or through requests for support services. Respondents were encouraged to add any comments concerning PSEO and their experiences with students with disabilities or special needs.

Results

The Directors of Postsecondary Enrollment Options Programs at the postsecondary institutions were very cooperative; 90% responded to the survey. Review of the total number of participants at each institution and the number reported as having a handicapping condition or special need indicates that 318 (8%) of the reported 4,183 participants in PSEO are considered to be students with disabilities or special needs.

Participation at Postsecondary Institutions

In Table 1 we report the number of students with disabilities formally identified as participants in PSEO at the various types of institutions. Community colleges and the University system have the greatest number of participants in PSEO. However, the greatest number of participants with handicapping conditions are attending technical colleges (204). The other large group of participants with disabilities or special needs are enrolled at the five campuses of the University of Minnesota (89). Ninety-two percent of all PSEO students with disabilities or special needs are enrolled at either a technical college or a University campus. The private colleges reported that none of the PSEO students attending their colleges have handicapping conditions or special needs.

The Technical Colleges also have the highest percentage of students with disabilities enrolled in their PSEO program (26%). The University campuses reported 8% of their PSEO enrollment having a disability or special need.

While 90% of the institutions returned the survey, some respondents expressed difficulty being accurate. Since none of the participants in the PSEO program are required to indicate whether they have a disability, the program directors made their reports based on interviews with the students and reports from instructors. Personnel at the University of Minnesota main campus had the greatest difficulty reporting accurately since approximately one half of their 1063 participants register through the mail and are never seen by the program director. Consequently, the number of participants with disabilities or special needs at the University may be considerably higher than we report here.

Disability/Special Needs Categories of PSEO Participants

Of the 318 students with disabilities who participated in PSEO, 47% were identified as having learning disabilities or special needs, while 17% were gifted. Students reported as having emotional or behavioral disorder comprise 9% of the total of PSEO students with disabilties or special needs. Those reported as using English as their second language make up 8% of the participants and the group reported as having mental retardation or developmental disabilities comprise 7%. All other students with handicaps or special needs are participating in percentages less than 3%.

Table 1

PSEO Participants and Type of Postsecondary Institution

Type of Institution	N	Number of PSEO Participants	PSEO Participants with Disabilities or Special Needs
Technical College	27	791	204 (26%)
Community College	18	1,629	14 (1%)
State University	6	457	11 (2%)
University Campus	5	1,063	89 (8%)
Private College/Univ.	14	243	0
Total	70	4,183	318 (8%)

In Table 2 we report the disability categories or special needs of the participants at each of the postsecondary institutions. The technical colleges have students with nearly every disability enrolled through the PSEO program, while the state university system has very few participants with disabilities or special needs and those come from only three groups.

As noted above, the technical colleges have the greatest number of participants with disabilities or special needs. The majority of these students are students with learning disabilities (65%). Students with emotional or behavioral disorders make up the second largest group of PSEO students at the technical colleges (12%). The makeup of students with disabilities in technical colleges contrast with the makeup of students in the University system, which has the second highest percentage of students with disabilities or special needs participating in PSEO. Students considered gifted comprise the largest group using the University system (56%) with students reported as using English as their second language making up the second largest group (28%). Only 9% of University PSEO participants who have disabilities or special needs are described as having learning disabilities.

Metropolitan vs Non-metropolitan Participation

The various postsecondary institutions are available to students throughout Minnesota. However, only in the metropolitan area of Minneapolis and St. Paul are four of the five types of postsecondary institutions available. By and large, the areas outside of the metropolitan area have only one or two types of

Table 2

PSEO Students with Disabilities or Special Needs at Postsecondary Institutions

	Technical Colleges	Community Colleges	State Universities	University Campuses	Total
Autism	1				1(<1%)
Developmental Disabilities/ Mental Retardation	21				21(7%)
Emotional/Behavioral Disturbed	25	2			27(9%)
English as a Second Language		1		25	26(8%)
Gifted			2	50	52(17%)
Hearing Impairment	4	1	1	1	7(2%)
Learning Disabilities	133	5		8	146(47%)
Multiply Handicapped	2	1			3(1%)
Physically Handicapped	3	2	1	2	8(3%)
Speech	1				1(<1%)
Visual Handicaps	4	1		3	8(3%)
Other	10	1			11(4%)
Total	204(66%)	14(5%)	4(1%)	89(29%)	*311

*Total PSEO enrollment of students with disabilities or special needs is 318. However, only 311 are specifically identified by disability or special need.

postsecondary institutions available in their communities. In addition, the populations are smaller and, in general, more rural.

When the postsecondary institutions are divided into those located in the large Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area and those located outside the metropolitan area, dramatic differences are noted in the pattern of participation in technical colleges and University campuses. In the metropolitan area, 42% of all students enrolled in the technical colleges through PSEO are identified as having a handicapping condition or special need. This is contrasted with technical colleges in the other cities and towns of Minnesota where only 18% of their PSEO enrollment are reported as having a disability or special need. Nearly 100% of the University system participants with disabilities or special needs attend the University of Minnesota campus in the metropolitan area (88).

Individualized Education Plans

Directors of the PSEO programs indicated that Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) existed for 132 of the 318 program participants reported as having disabilities or special needs. Of these students, 128 were enrolled at the technical colleges. In many cases, the directors were unsure about whether the participant had an IEP.

Respondents' Comments

Of the 70 institutional respondents, 49 (70%) shared comments or concerns on the survey form. A review of the comments indicated that they could be sorted into eight categories: (a) resources, (b) knowledge of handicapping classification,

(c) policy concerns, (d) positive feedback, (e) student characteristics, (f) accessibility issues, (g) inadequate transition, and (h) miscellaneous comments.

In Table 3 we report the number of comments reported by respondents in each institution type for each response category. Program directors from the technical colleges provided the greatest number of comments (32), followed by the directors from community colleges (13) and private colleges (10). The most frequent comments were about resources (18). Inadequate transition, positive feedback and knowledge of classification comments are also frequently noted with 9 to 10 comments per category. The number of comments range from 1 to 6 for the remaining categories.

Comments representative of each of the categories are recorded in Table 4.

Discussion

The information gathered from the directors of the PSEO programs illustrates the importance of school choice issues for special education. Significant numbers of students with disabilities or special needs are participating in this particular option. The extent of their participation is encouraging since it indicates that the enrollment option program is reaching many 11th and 12th grade students with disabilities or special needs.

Table 3

Number of Comments from Program Directors at Postsecondary Institutions

Categories	Technical College	Community College	State University	University Campus	Private Colleges	Total
Resources	11	4	1	0	2	18(30%)
Knowledge of Classification	3	3	2	1	0	9(15%)
Policy	2	1	1	0	1	5(8%)
Positive Feedback	3	3		0	3	9(15%)
Student Characteristics	3	2		0	0	5(8%)
Accessibility Issues	1	0		0	2	3(5%)
Inadequate Transition	8	0		0	2	10(17%)
Miscellaneous	1	0		0	0	1(2%)
TOTAL	32(53%)	13(22%)	4(7%)	1(2%)	10(17%)	60

Table 4

Representative Comments

Resources	We are not staffed to provide extra tutoring for these students beyond what we would ordinarily offer our students.
	Also the question of who would pay for additional services for PSEO students, i.e. interpreter for hearing impaired student. What services are required from the college level?
	Students should verify that support services/facilities are greater at the post-secondary school than at the secondary school or they should not access the PSEO program.
	Support services funding needed for secondary students at the post-secondary institution. Presently we do not serve those students except for some tutoring which is directly related to their course of study.
	One of the concerns we have is PSEO students who need specialized help are not able to access the resource center because it is designated for post-secondary students only. PSEO students are not allowed these extra services.
	Students that possess learning disabilities can receive help-but we cannot attend to those with severe disabilities.
	Which institution is responsible for the support services for the student?
Knowledge of Classification/ Category	We have no data to categorize the students.
	Unless a student informs us of a handicap, [School] does not ask.
	The only method we have for finding out information is by self-disclosure by the individual student.
	The college could have a student with a disability in a course and not even know it if their needs were met at their primary institution. An example might be attending [postsecondary institution] for a music lesson.

Table 4 (continued)

Representative Comments

Policy	Where can they be best served?
	[Concern is for] the rate of success for those enrolled at our campus.
	[Concern about their] ability to compete in college-level general studies courses. Industry is demanding that employees have a good understanding of basic skills (i.e. math, language, reading); where will PSEO students get these skills if they are not in high school and cannot compete in college level courses?
	Our admission requirements are pretty selective which tends to make it tough for most students to enroll in a program to begin with. I think, generally, students with handicaps have not pursued the program because of this factor.
	Students coming to the college need to be prepared for college level work at the onset.
Positive Feedback	When the high schools are able to work closely with them and follow-up on their classes here it helps. Feedback from schools and parents regarding these students is very positive. Most are succeeding here and also doing better in high school and have a better attitude at high school. The "hands on" classes here seem to be meeting an important need for these students.
	There have not been any problems. The high schools involved have been providing services.
	We have not yet had the experience of working with post secondary option students with disabilities. However, we are prepared to meet their needs since we do have a sound special services program in place which serves our regular population of disabled college students.
	We welcome <u>all</u> students to our program.

Table 4 (continued)

Representative Comments

Students Characteristics	Maturity level conflicts with maturity level of student body.
	Usually [students] are [unable] to be self-motivated. Most need extensive reading and math skills.
	Persons with disabilities have more adjustments than those without disabilities but our experience has been favorable albeit limited.
Accessibility Issues	The biggest concern with students demonstrating a physical handicap is that we don't have the facilities for students in wheelchairs in all of our buildings.
	Our campus is accessible to people with disabilities.
Inadequate Transition	Early in the enrollment process the transition team should communicate with postsecondary special needs personnel to assure that the necessary accommodations are provided for students who need them.
	Incomplete IEP goals [are a concern]. Poor communication with some special education teachers in school. Sometimes students are "dumped" with limited support from the schools and limited thought about choices they are making for some students.
	One concern we have is that we be notified by the high school of any post secondary option student requiring special services. The communication needs to be there.
	We do not get the IEP from the secondary school if the student has one!
Miscellaneous	Most register in food service, auto body, auto mechanics.

Participation of Students with Disabilities or Special Needs

The number of students considered gifted who are accessing postsecondary institutions during their high school years is not unexpected. What is surprising, perhaps, is the number of students with disabilities who are participating in a program that allows postsecondary coursework. Twenty-five percent of the PSEO participants with disabilities or special needs are reported as being gifted or using English as a second language (ESL); the remaining 75% are identified as having a handicapping condition that is not usually associated with postsecondary enrollment. It is interesting to note that, with the exception of the category of EBD, all handicapping conditions are represented by participants in the program in proportions similar to the percentages of 16 to 21 year old special education students reported by the Minnesota Department of Education. In Minnesota approximately 24% of 16-21 year old special education students are EBD; only 9% of special education students who participate in PSEO are EBD.

Our findings indicating proportional participation by special education students are different than those of Butler-Nalin, Marder, and Shaver (1989), who report postsecondary participation being significantly related to youth's functional ability.

Many of the ESL students participating in PSEO are foreign exchange students attending American schools to experience life at an American high school. Some of these students, who have already completed high school in their home countries, are encouraged to enroll in PSEO to be exposed to new or more challenging coursework at the universities or colleges. This use of the PSEO program is

not considered to follow the intent of the legislation and the law was recently changed disallowing participation by high school cultural exchange students.

Participation at Differing Types of Postsecondary Institutions

Although all handicapping conditions and special needs groups are participating in PSEO, there is little differentiation in where they attend. Most attend a technical college. There are alternative explanations for this finding. One explanation is that the criteria for attending private colleges, university campuses, community college campuses, and state universities often require student records of academic excellence. Even though PSEO is a choice program and school districts must allow students to take advantage of the option, the postsecondary institutions have the right to refuse to accept a student. Some private colleges will only enroll students in the top 10% of their high school class and others will only accept students in the top third. A new policy guideline has been adopted by some postsecondary institutions whereby students should be in the top third of their class to participate in PSEO during their junior year and in the top half during their senior year. Students with disabilities or special needs traditionally are not in the top half of their class. This means that many are ineligible for participation at some of the colleges, but eligible for participation at the technical colleges.

Transition planning at the secondary schools may also account for the high percentage of participants with disabilities at the technical colleges. Many high schools are in the process of

implementing transition programs for students who are in their last two years of high school. Taking advantage of PSEO gives students an opportunity to experience a postsecondary setting yet maintain connections with high school staff who have played an integral part in establishing transition goals. Some teachers at the high school level may be using PSEO as a vehicle for transition planning. They may believe that the student is more successful in a less rigorous academic environment such as a technical college, and thus encourage them to attend.

For those students with developmental disabilities, the technical college is the most logical postsecondary placement since some of its vocational programs are designed for students with developmental disabilities. Many students with these disabilities attend school until age 21, so PSEO offers them the opportunity for new coursework in a new setting during their many years in high school. While this finding makes sense for students with developmental disabilities, one would expect more variety of institution choice among those students with other disabilities.

Students Reported as Gifted

The absence of students identified as gifted at the technical colleges and community colleges should be noted. It is difficult to determine why neither of these institutions had gifted students participating in PSEO. The technical colleges' vocational versus professional focus may provide some explanation if it is assumed that students who are in high school programs for the gifted are eventually going to attend a college or university. But with the community colleges being the most accessible postsecondary

colleges throughout the state, a question remains as to why more gifted students were not reported by the community colleges.

Private colleges and universities made positive comments about PSEO and about being able to serve students with disabilities or special needs. However, they reported no PSEO participants with disabilities or special needs at their institutions, nor even PSEO participants who were considered gifted. One director commented that secondary students should be given more information about PSEO and private colleges, along with universities. Lack of information about PSEO and private colleges and the eligibility requirements, could explain the absence of some students at the private colleges.

Implications

The survey confirms the participation of students with disabilities and special needs and the extent of the participation. We know the extent to which IEPs are shared with postsecondary institutions and the concerns of the directors of the PSEO programs. How does a choice program such as PSEO affect students with disabilities or special needs? What is the possible effect on the postsecondary institution? What are the implications for transition planning and support services and their funding?

Directors shared particular concerns about support services. They were concerned about who should provide and fund support services. Some college personnel contend that the postsecondary institutions do not have adequate or trained staff and are not funded to provide these services. The current system of payment

leaves the special education monies at the school district. Some would argue that the school district should provide support services for the PSEO special education student just as they do for the student who remains in the school district. These concerns are pertinent to the success of the student at the postsecondary level because support services are an important element of postsecondary education for those with disabilities (Longo, 1988; Putnam, 1984). The number of comments shared by the directors relating to support services, the need, and the concern for funding accentuates the importance of the issue.

The implications of concern about support services would seem to differ as a function of the type of postsecondary institution involved, the type of disability or special need being served, and the location of the postsecondary institution. Technical schools had the greatest percentage of students with disabilities enrolled in PSEO. Their need for support services would appear to be different from those of the University system where the majority of students were reported as being gifted. In addition, the technical schools in the metropolitan area of Minneapolis and St. Paul have the greatest percentage of PSEO students with disabilities. The development of policies concerning support services would effect them more than those institutions located outside of the metropolitan area where the PSEO enrollment of students with disabilities is not nearly as great.

The implications for transition planning are relevant to both the secondary schools and the postsecondary institutions. How transition planning is implemented in relationship to the

enrollment option appears to be an issue. Many respondents noted the need to be informed of the student's disability and voiced a desire to work with the high school to implement the best plan for the student. In addition, many respondents commented on the importance of communication between the high school and the postsecondary institution. For some respondents this meant more access to the IEP. Yet, specific responsibility for the smooth transition of the student between high school and the postsecondary institution has not been established.

It may be that the current rules regarding PSEO affect the information given to postsecondary institutions. If a student's Individual Education Plan calls for the student to attend a postsecondary institution for transition purposes or any other purpose, the school district must provide transportation. However, if the student independently enrolls in the postsecondary institution through the PSEO program, the transportation is the responsibility of the student or the family unless they apply and qualify for funds provided to low-income families. Given this rule it may not be surprising that postsecondary institutions are not given a great deal of information about transition, since adopting PSEO as an official IEP goal would cost the school district transportation money. It would be interesting to determine the extent to which information is transferred to the postsecondary institution for those students with IEPs that clearly state transition planning goals relating to PSEO.

Another reason the postsecondary schools may not be receiving information about the students with disabilities may have to do

with the students themselves. It may be that the schools are not completely aware of all the students who are using the PSEO option and the support services they may need because the student has decided to enroll in the program and become independent of special education. During interviews of students with disabilities who have accessed school choice programs, a comment heard repeatedly was that they found "choice" to be advantageous to them because they could start over and could shed their special education label. Allard's work with postsecondary students with learning disabilities found that many of these students "hide-out" during their first months at a postsecondary institution so as to avoid being identified as having a disability (Allard, Dodd, & Peralez, March, 1987).

Regardless of the reason, the institutions' lack of knowledge about students with disabilities has implications for the students and their programs. Success in the PSEO program may be affected by the lack of knowledge because it reduces the availability of support services to the student. However, the other consideration for students with disabilities is whether discrimination will occur if their disability is made known to the college or instructors. Since the postsecondary institution has the right of refusal on all applications and since the responsibility for cost of support services has not yet been established, the possibility exists for unfair review. It is an implication that must be considered when reviewing procedures for serving students with disabilities in a choice program.

The issue of support services and who should provide them should not overshadow the important role PSEO is serving for students with disabilities and special needs. High school students have had the opportunity to enroll in postsecondary institutions for many years. Under the former arrangement school districts had to give approval for every student who wished to enroll in a postsecondary institution during high school. It is doubtful that students with disabilities were often given that option. PSEO gives some of that control to the student because the student can apply to the PSEO program. This option provides an opportunity for students with disabilities or special needs to access a postsecondary program without the consent of the school district. The option provides a level of choice to the student.

While it was established in this study that students with disabilities or special needs are accessing the postsecondary enrollment option program, and in which locations and what types of institutions, we did not explore the success of the actual program for the students themselves. Questions about the effects of the postsecondary options programs on participants with disabilities or special needs and their educational progress need to be addressed.

It is encouraging that students with disabilities and special needs are accessing the Postsecondary Enrollment Option. The concept of attending a postsecondary institution during high school is exciting. It is especially noteworthy that students with disabilities are not being excluded from the program. It is also noteworthy that conversations with those directing the

programs revealed a sense of cooperation concerning students with disabilities or special needs.

School choice is here with its many options and programs. The Postsecondary Enrollment Option is growing in its popularity and with it the participation of students with disabilities and special needs.

References

Allard, W. G. (1987). Keeping LD students in college. Academic Therapy, 22(4), 359-365.

Butler-Nalin, P., Marder, C. (1989, March). Making the transition: An explanatory model of special education students' participation in postsecondary education. Paper presented at the annual meetings of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA.

Education Commission of the States (1989). Public school choice activity in the states. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States.

Longo, J. A. (1988). The learning disabled: Challenge to postsecondary institutions. Journal of Developmental Education, 11(3), 10-14.

New Jersey Department of Education (1989). Public school choice: New options for New Jersey students, parents, and educators. Trenton, NJ: New Jersey Department of Education.

Putnam, M. L. (19874). Postsecondary education for learning disabled students: A review of the literature. Journal of College Student Personnel, 25(1), 68-75.

Paulu, N. (1989). Improving schools and empowering parents: Choice in American education. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.